

And, finally, that following the debate on the amendments, the amendments be laid aside, with votes to occur on or in relation to the amendments in the order in which they were offered, beginning at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, with 4 minutes for debate prior to each vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. In light of this agreement, there will be no further votes today. The next vote will occur on Tuesday, at 2:15 p.m.

Mr. President, let me again thank you for your courtesy, and that of the clerks, who listened to me intently. I understand there may be some more morning business time available. I invite my colleagues to engage in the debate on the subject of ANWR at any time they appear on the floor, in my office, or outside.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I alert my colleagues that an extraordinary thing happened yesterday in the House of Representatives. The House accepted the Senate bill on nuclear waste without amending the Senate bill.

As the occupant of the Chair knows, oftentimes the House has a little difference of opinion on what is good for the country. The bill we passed in the Senate on nuclear waste had certainly a vigorous debate in this body. There were 64 votes recorded for the legislation which would resolve what to do with our high-level nuclear waste and how to proceed with the dilemma associated with the reality that the Federal Government had entered into a contract in 1998 to take this waste from the electric-power-generating units that were dependent on nuclear energy. This is the high-level rods that have partially reduced their energy capacity and have to be stored. We have had this continued buildup of high-level waste adjacent to our reactors.

The significance of this is that this industry contributes about 20 percent of our power generation in this country. There are those who don't favor nuclear energy and, as a consequence, would like to see the nuclear industry come to an end. But they accept no responsibility for where the power is

going to be made up. Clearly, if you lose a significant portion, you will have to make it up someplace else.

The point of this was to try to come to grips with a couple of things. One is that the ratepayers have paid the Federal Government \$15 billion over an extended period of time to take the waste in 1998. The second issue is the cost to the taxpayers because since the Federal Government has failed to meet the terms of the contract and honor the sanctity of the contract agreement, there are damages and litigation from the power companies to the Federal Government. That cost is estimated to be somewhere in the area of \$40 to \$80 billion to the taxpayer in legal fees associated with these claims that only the court will finally adjudicate.

By passing the Senate bill in the House—I believe the vote was 275—indeed, it moved the issue closer to a resolve. Many in this body would like to not address it. That is irresponsible, both from the standpoint of the taxpayer and from the standpoint of the sanctity of a contractual commitment. If we don't do it, somebody else is going to have to do it on a later watch.

The difficulty is, nobody wants the nuclear waste. But if you throw it up in the air, it is going to come down somewhere.

France reprocesses theirs. The French learned something in 1973, during the Arab oil embargo. They learned that they would never be held hostage by the Mideast oil barons and be subservient to whatever the dictates of those oil nations were and what it cost the French economy in 1973. As a consequence, they proceeded towards the development of a nuclear power capability second to none. About 92 percent France's power is generated by nuclear energy. They have addressed the issue of the waste by reprocessing it through recycling, recovering the plutonium, putting it back in the reactors, and recovering the residue. The residue, after you take the high-level plutonium out, has a very short life. It is called vitrification.

In any event, we are stuck still. We can't resolve what to do with our waste. But we have a bill that has moved out of the House. It is our bill. I have every belief it will go down to the White House. We will have to see if the President wants to reconsider his veto threat in view of the energy crisis we have in this country now and the fact that the administration does not have an energy policy, let alone the willingness to address its responsibility under the contractual terms to accept the waste. If the administration chooses to veto it, we have the opportunity for a veto override. In this body, we are two votes short.

I encourage my colleagues, particularly over this weekend as they go home, to recognize that this issue is going to be revisited in this body. If

they have nuclear reactors in their State and they don't support a veto override, they are going to have to wear the badge, the identification of being with those who want to keep the waste in their State. That is where it will stay. It will stay in temporary storage near the reactors that are overcrowded and that were not designed for long-term storage. It will never get out of their State unless we come together and move this legislation, if the President does not sign it now that it has gone through the House and Senate.

Unfortunately, this would put the waste ultimately in Nevada where we have had 50 years of nuclear testing out in the desert, an area that has already been pretty heavily polluted. We have spent over \$7 billion in Nevada at Yucca Mountain where we are building a permanent repository. Quite naturally, the Nevadans, my colleagues, will throw themselves down on the railroad track to keep this from happening.

But the point is, you have to put it somewhere. In my State of Alaska, we don't currently have any reactors.

As chairman of the Energy Committee, my responsibility is to try to address this national problem, with a resolve. What we have, obviously, is this legislation that has passed both the House and the Senate. It will be back. It will be revisited. I encourage my colleagues to recognize that we have a responsibility to address this on our watch. If we put it off, somebody else is going to have to address it. It is going to cost the taxpayer more. Now is the time, since we finally have a bill that has gone through the House and Senate.

The interesting thing is, had the House taken up our bill and amended it, we would be hopelessly lost because there would be a filibuster on appointment of conferees. It would take 9 days or something like that. It could not be done.

That didn't happen in the House. I commend the Speaker, DENNY HASTERT, for keeping a commitment. I commend our leader, Senator LOTT, who made a commitment that we were going to bring this up. Not only did we bring it up but we passed it.

I alert my colleagues, again, what goes around comes around. We are going to get this back. If you are against it, you had better come up with something else that is a better idea. Otherwise, it will stay in your State. If you want to get it out of your State in a permanent repository, you had better get behind this bill, if we have to go for a veto override.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.